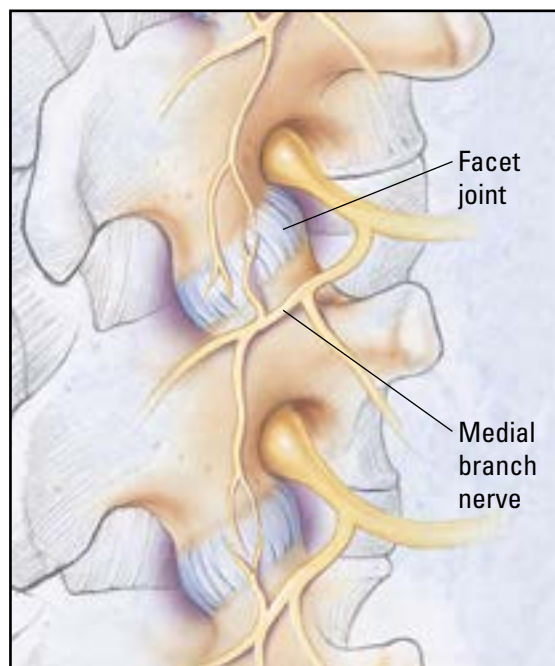


Medial Branch Nerves

Each vertebra in your spine has **facets** (flat surfaces). They touch where the vertebrae fit together. This forms a **facet joint**. Each facet joint has at least two **medial branch nerves**. They are part of the nerve pathway to and from each facet joint. A facet joint in your back or neck can become **inflamed** (swollen and irritated). Pain messages may then travel along the nerve pathway from the facet joint to your brain.



Blocking Pain Messages

Medial branch nerves in each facet joint send and carry messages about back or neck pain. Destroying a few of these nerves can keep certain pain messages from reaching the brain. This can help bring you relief. (Note that medial branches don't control muscles or sensation in the arms or legs.)

Discussing Your Results

Pain relief can help you enjoy your life again. Let your provider know if you still have pain after your treatment. The treatment often lasts about 6 months to a year or so. After this time, the nerves can regrow. Pain may then come back. If this happens, you may need to be treated again.

Special Instructions:

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Medial Branch Neurotomy



Treating Your Pain

Back or neck pain may be due to problems with certain nerves and nerve signals near your spine. If so, a **medial branch neurotomy** can help relieve your pain. The treatment uses heat, cold, or chemicals to destroy certain nerves near a problem spinal joint. This keeps some pain messages from traveling to the brain and helps relieve your symptoms.



Pain messages may travel along medial branch nerves from problem spinal joints to your brain.

Getting Ready

- At least a week before treatment, tell your provider what medications you take, including over-the-counter medications, herbal remedies, and supplements. Ask whether you should stop taking any of them before treatment.
- Tell your provider if you are pregnant. Also mention allergies to any medications.
- Stop eating or drinking as directed before your treatment, often 8 hours.
- If asked, bring x-rays, MRIs, or other tests with you on the day of the treatment.

Your Treatment Experience

The treatment is done in a hospital or surgery center. You'll be asked to fill out some forms, including a consent form. You may also be examined. You may be given an **IV (intravenous) line** for fluids and medications.

During the Procedure

To help you relax, medication may be given through the IV line. You will lie on an exam table on your stomach, back, or side depending on where the problem joint is. During your treatment:

- The skin over the treatment site is cleaned and then numbed with medication.
- **Fluoroscopy** (x-ray imaging) is used to help your provider see the spine and guide the treatment. Contrast fluid may be injected into the affected region. This helps structures and tissues show up clearly on x-rays.
- Heat, cold, or chemicals are used to destroy part of the nerve near the inflamed facet joint. Other nerves nearby may also be treated.



Fluoroscopy helps guide treatment.



Relax at home for the rest of the day after your treatment, even if you feel good.

After the Procedure

- You can go home after a short time of rest and observation, often within an hour. Have an adult family member or friend drive you.
- The treated area may be swollen and feel more sore than usual. This is normal and may last for a day or so.
- It may be a few days before you get relief from your symptoms. You may be prescribed pain medications to take during this time.
- Ask your provider when you can go back to work.

Call Your Provider if You Have:

- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as directed by your provider
- Warmth, redness, swelling, drainage, or bleeding at the treatment site

Risks and Complications Include:

- Infection
- Bleeding
- Increased pain, numbness, or weakness
- Nerve damage
- Failure to relieve pain